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AUTHOR Ogamo, Hideo
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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews the historical and social background of prejudice and discrimination toward the handicapped in Japan and considers its effect on special education programing. The history of welfare work for the physically handicapped is traced from the Primitive Age to the present. The origins of prejudice and discrimination are discussed; contradictions which still remain in Japan are pointed out. (SBH)

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The Impact of the Japanese Culture on Special Education Programming

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Panel 40

Hideo Ogamo

Special Education Supervisor
Ministry of Education, Science
and Culture in Japan

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"The Impact of the Japanese Culture
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It goes without saying that,when a country is about to propel and diffuse its educational policy,the political,economical,cultural and social restrictions affect the policy greatly in any country.

As object of education is the special child in the case of special education particularly,it may be the fact that special education tends to be more affected by the above restrictions than ordinary education is.

Above all,culture is old with history of a country and is peculiar in each country,and its influence on education is serious. So culture may,further,reflect and project on education in such a case as Japan which has the different culture in quality from that of Western Europian countries.

In Japan various kinds of prejudice and feeling of discrimination to the handicapped based upon the unique racial thought has been dominant since old time.

Accordingly it is supposed to be very important that we must propel the policy adding cultural considerations when we plan to program special education.

Surely these prejudice and feeling of discrimination must be completely eliminated some day and nowadays various kinds of counterplans are gradually taken.

We are going to seek for the historical and social background from which these prejudice and discrimination result,in order to study what kind of consideration we need on special education programming.

1. The history of welfare work for the physically handicapped

Primitive Age(-644)

It was not until the fourth century that powerful clans started to appear in our history. Before this century,we had the least influence of foreign culture and society,mainly made up of families of the same blood,had been maintained only by means of farming.

During the primitive age,when natural environment was not conditioned to support human life easily,it was difficult for the family to maintain the disabled and old people by their own responsibility. Therefore they were often deserted miserably,in order to let the healthy people survive. The handicapped were helped to survive only in cases when they were needed for the tribe but never so by philanthropism. Some were abandoned. On the other hand,those who contributed to the upkeep of the race or clan were treated leniently. Especially those with special skills such as fortunetelling or imprecation were respected highly by the society.

According to ancient manuscripts named "Kojiki"(712 A.D.),it is known that the handicapped were regarded as abnormal beings,but on the other hand some of them were revered as sons of god. In general, there existed a notion that they came into being by the imprecation of god.

Ancient Society (645-1159)

a) The Early Days of the Ancient Society

In the sixth century,a powerful clan named"Yamato" dominated the others and took complete power to rule the territory. It could be said that this was the start of the Japanese government. Japan exchanged cultures with China,in the following century,which brought into this country various remarkable cultures originating from religion. They effectively altered old ideas and thoughts in politics and economics. There arose a unified movement of reformation to centralize administrative power in the Nara Period. Shortly,fundamental doctrines named "Taiho-ritsu-ryo" were constituted to rule the nation. According to these doctrines,it was regulated to protect crippled and invalid people and the merciless custom of abandoning old or handicapped people was practically abolished.

b) The Nara Period

The Nara Period in Japan falls on the eighth century. In this period,the political system of centralization started to expand more effectively on the strength of the Imperial Household. Buddhism,as the continental religion,was brought in to our country from China through Korea and also spread its roots widely in Japan.

Nevertheless,the Buddhist conception against the handicapped was fatal. That is,to be born crippled was fatality and could not be removed by human power. Then,the only way to revive the handicapped was to let them attain higher perception and live in faith and conviction. A blind priest from China named Ganjin was a good example, He created a great sensation and largely influenced the people by propagating his teaching throughout the country. Moreover,he built the temple named Toshodaiji and left a footprint of Buddhism philosophy on the religious minds of Japanese people. It was really a strong stimulus to the handicapped that his teaching was based on his own experience of attempting to attain a happier life in spite of his handicap.

He taught that even handicapped people could revive their life from deep despair and could create a better life as the result of pursuing their spiritual training.

In this century discovery of the handicapped was quite difficult because they were looked after by laymen who had experience taking care of the sick, and the handicapped were usually hidden in their homes. No nationwide survey was made about the handicapped but only a regional survey. Only a powerful clan made a survey within its own territory. For instance,in a territory called Mino(Gifu-Prefecture at present)regardless of rich or poor,a statute was set up to take care of the handicapped that provided one maid for each handicapped over eight years of age.

In addition,the Emperor constructed a temple called Shitennoji in Oseka at the beginning of the eighth century. It provided charitable care and medical services for the handicapped as a part of the practices of the temple. It was a fortunate thing that the Emperor himself took the initiative to start such a service for the physically handicapped even though it was not done in a systematic or scientific manner. The other noticeable works by the Imperial H usehold were building dispensaries,hospitals,orphanages,and almshouses,and giving shelter for the homeless,poor and sick. Certainly,the handicapped also had this privilege. But nothing was taught or instructed in these places to restore them to living in the society.

c) The Heian Period

The period between the end of the eighth century and the middle of the twelfth is called the Heian Period. It was the period of climax for imperialism led by the nobles. The political system was largely adjusted. Also literature and art developed conspicuously with the Imrerial Household as the core.

The social welfare works,however,made no favorable steps as compared to the other cultural developments. The development of measures to relieve the blind,which started around this period,was the only exception. An unprecedented happening had occurred in the Imperial Throne in this century. In 1012, the Emperor Sanjo lost his eyesight because of his sickness. He sympathized with those in the same situation and granted every sort of support. Therefore, it is said that the welfare services for the blind really took place in this period. Prince Saneyasu, the fourth son of the Emperor Ninmei also lost his eyesight. He served rice to the blind to help their livelihood and gave special permission for them to make their living by teaching music with the musical instrument named the Biwa(it is like a mandoline) and the Koto(Japanese harp). As a matter of fact,there appeared many famous and excellent Koto & Biwa players at that time. Taxes collected within the territory were granted for the relief expenses of the blind. Naturally,this was a great measure to meet the social need of relief. In order to conserve the privileges for the blind in 1300, a regally definite rank was given according to ability so that the position of the blind could be protected. This was unique way to protect the blind.

The Medieval Feudal Ages (1167-1596)

The medieval feudal ages for Japan,known as the civil war era,came between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries. In this time political power was completely handed over to the samurai from the nobles. During this period, many revolutions and battles occurred because the nobles became nominal rulers having little practical power in productivity,while the warriors rose up from the firmly rooted lower middle social class which had aggressive ambition to

dominate society. Since they lived in a world where success is only achieved by ability,often followers tried to dominate their masters. Battles and rebellions had started and put innocent people into horror. In 1337,when Ashikaga Takauji had the reins of the government,there lived a blind man of high rank named Akashi Kengyo. He,who was in the direct lineage of Ashikaga,set up his office in Kyoto, the capital at that time,for the mutual aid of the blind. He contributed to establish a system of self-government of the blind people. He was the one who really created the guild for the blind.

The Modern Feudal Age (1596-1867)

In this period, Tokugawa brought the whole land under his rule after the competitive battles of samurai in the turbulent age. From the end of the 16th century,Japan at first started to have relations with European countries, breaking the strict tradition of isolation. Foreign culture flowed into Japan together with Christianity. From their influences trade,weapons and diplomatic relations in Japan were changed progressively. The Tokugawa Shogunate removed the capital from Kyo o to Edo which is the Tokyo of today.

After Tokugawa took the sole power,the blind were closely united with the Shogunates. The reason was that medicine was completely under the hands of the blind at that time. Consequently,they were considered very important as physicians for the Shogun. Moreover,there were many remarkable scholars and musicians among the blind.

Permission was granted to set up another office in Edo for the blind. Many other subordinate offices were also set up locally. They became independent in administration. Taxes were mostly exempted. Office expenditures were subsidized by the national treasury or clan funds. Thus,extreme generosity was given to the blind.

Nevertheless,these measures all originated as works of compassion and enlightment for the blind people and they were the social works of the feudalistic ages. It can safely be said that the government gave sanction to set up independent guilds for the control of the special profession,but in a certain sense, by giving ndependence to the blind,the government attempted to alleviate the burdens on general society. In the Edo Period vocational training was given to the blind. Those with such techniques as massage and music were protected and to relieve the other blind,the government allocated some funds to manage a loan business. Indeed,there were many injurious effects in the administration of the loan fund system,but the policy of a grant-in-aid by a loan system was a notable one. Compared to the support of the blind,we could not see any noticeable support for the other handicapped people.

The Modern Age (1867-presqnt)

a) The Meiji Period(1868-1912)

For two and a half centuries prior to 1867,Japan had been a hermit nation according to the national policy of isolation and keeping her own culture strictly in her own territory. She jealously excluded foreigners and refused to enter into diplomatic relations with the Western powers. But in this period, at length, the seclusion from the foreign powers enforced by the Tokugawa was broken and they opened the country to Western influences,under which Japan soon awoke to modern life. In the course of a half century following this social and political change in Japan,progress made by Japan in all lines;political,material,and intellectual,it was extremely rapid and something without parallel in history.

After the Shogunate returned political power to the Emperor,the internal administrative system was eformed and amended. Some privileges had been graned to the blind in the Tokugawa Era,but in 1871,a new order came into force to take such privileges away from the blind. The promulgation of the provisions for the educational system made it possible to set up special education.

In 1878,the first school for the blind was established,and gradually special education became enthusiastic throughout the country. In 1898,a school for the blind and deaf was started in Tokyo,and the trai ing school for special educators also came into being.

There were two big wars,the China-Japanese War(1894-1895)and the Russo-Japanese War(1904-1905) in the Meiji period. The war wounded eterans caused by the wars were not treated so considerately despite the fact that the veterans

wandered all over the country in groups and forced people to give them donations. Inspite of this despairing situation,the government did not take any strong measure for them. Only one institution had been built for veterans in Tokyo in 1935 by a voluntary organization. In other words,rehabilitation work for the war wounded veterans was pioneered by civil cooperations,not merely by the government.

There were so many injured people from railway work that a young Christian working for the National Railways made a movement for a pension system for the injured. They pioneered for aid to the handicapped railway employees.

b) The Taisho Per od(1912-1926)

On September 1,1923, the severest earthquake hit the Kanto Area and in an instant more than 150,000 people were killed and thousands of handicapped were born. Many relief goods and funds were donated from people in other countries as well as in Japan. Public opinion to have handicapped civilians rehabilitated moved the government so much that they built special institutions for the handicapped, where they could learn vocational te hniques. The institutions were for the handicapped over 18 years of age,and gave them some vocational training,the first in Japan. It was Professor Dr. Kenji Takagi,the so-called father of crippled children,who clearly defined the philosophy of rehabilitation in its modern sense for the first time, approximately forty-five years ago. In early 1910th,Dr. Takagi started medical rehabilitation for the crippled children. In 1924,Dr.Takagi published an article,"Krueppelheim:A Hospital and Home for Crippled Children"in the state medical journal No.449 in order to establish the theoretical basis of rehabilitation,a system of medical treatment and education for physically handicapped children. It should be borne in mind here that the development of rehabilitation services as a whole was pioneered by such a great voluntary effort.

c) The Showa Period and World War II (1926-)

In any country it is a common phenomenon that the nation must be responsible for measures to let the war wounded veterans be rehabilitated, because of their acute need in the aftermass of the war. This need influenced people to become involved in rehabilitation,and services were developed. And consequently,the movement to help veterans spread into the field of rehabilitation for crippled civilians too.

During World War II,the government executed medical treatment,vocational training and all other possible means to protect such veterans by a centralized executive committee composed of specialists. The veterans were treated extremely generously by the government. But after the war,the priority of the veterans in terms of hospitalization,institutional care,financial assistance,etc. was amended by the Allied Occupational Forces.

The Occupational Force suggested that any handicapped person regardless of whether he is a veteran or civilian could be a recipient of equal benefit of social securities with equal human right. Inaddition to the amended security laws for war veterans and workmen,the Welfare Law for the Physically Handicapped was established in December 1949,in order to help all the physically handicapped equqlly in Japan. In accordance with the law,the frame work of rehabilitation has gradually been cemented by the cooperative effort of government and voluntary agencies in Japan. Especially recently development can be observed in various facets of rehabilitation services. The number of agencies for the physically handicapped has been increased; quality of rehabilitation services has been reevaluated and examined;staff training fas come to the concern of the professional in the various and physical medicine, social work,and therapy,vocational rehabilitation services,in order to professionalize their service to a higher level. Japan has come to the stage of striving for an international level in rehabilitation service.

2. Origin of prejudice and discrimination

In traditional Japan,strongly influenced by the Buddhist theory of cause and effect,the handicapped were seen as symbols of ill fortune. This superstition finds its roots in the Buddhist belief that the soul is immortal and may appear in flesh form seven times,either as a human being or an animal, depending on good or evil behavior in a previous life. So,for hundreds of years the people have persisted in the superstitions belief that human being who did not adhere to the teachings of Buddha in one life would appear as physically disabledpersons in subsequent lives. Such unscientific and distorted ideas were being taught untill a few decades ago,and perhaps even today in certain rural communities. In this contex it may be observed that parents often rely on threats of dire consequences to enforce discipline. Lessons in good manners, obedience to parents, respect for the aged,and diligence in work are taught through stories and examples of folklore. These stories always present the difficult or troubled condition of the story subject as being the result of heavenly punishment for certain misdeeds,and children are very quick to identify the disabled as degraded persons in a prior life or as recieving punishment for misbehavior in this life.

With long use of such a frightening and erroneous method of child discipline it is not difficult to trace the origins of a prevalent mental attitude which accepts such misconceptions as "mental illness and retardation are hereditary" and "birth of a malformed child indicates criminal ancestors in the family.

A comparison of Japanese and Western social structures is useful in understanding the peculiarites of discrimination in Japanese culture.

In Western society each person is seen as an independent individual. With this in mind,the motivation for rehabilitation is to assist the disabled indivisual in becoming independent physically,socially,and vocationally. Rehabilitation takes the form of services such as medical treatment,vocational training,education,psychological support, transportation and housing.

In contract,Japanese society is composed of subgroups delineated by rigid boundaries which tend to weaken individual, independent identity. Decisions made are generally group decisions,and action taken are group actions. Children are perceived as dependent belongings of their parents,especially the mother, and this dependency is maintained until the child matures and establishes economic independence.

Since disabled persons,particularly the seriously handicapped,have less opportunity for independence,their social weaning is delayed or never occurs at all. Within the subgroup the handicapped child and its parents are viewed as one unit bound by attitudes and treatment prevalent with that subgroup. If this is a positive orientation, the disabled child or adult is well protected. If the subgroup reacts negatively to the situation,pressres often build to the point of suicide by the parent handicapped child unit.

One of the most outstanding psychological characteristics of the Japanese is the desire to conform to be the same as others in the community. This may be due to the fact that Japan is uniracial and geographically isolated,precluding a large amount of ethnic and cultural intercourse. Such people tend to feel most secure and comfortable in groups of like appearance and common thought.

In this context the disabled individual is different from the norm,and whereas Western attitudes permit acceptance of differences quite readily,the Japanese re t to this as something wrong,therefore unacceptable.

With such a social background the Japanese parent feels shame and guilt when the child is different from others in appearance or behavior.

The handicapped child may therefore be hidden,which may not mean well-protected. It may mean a denial of existence and non-verbal avoidance.

The psychological basis of family-handicapped suicide may be explained by the concept that the child is the parent-adjunct and not an independent individual. The expectation in Japanese society is that the problems of the child are the parents' responsibility and should be solved by the parents alone. This attitude is manifested in various practical problem; reluctance on the

part of parents to discuss the child's problem with other members of the community,resulting in an apathetic community attitude;difficulty and expence involved in securing help when the parent of the child is ill;inadequate medical assistance;meager social security and the prospect of lifelong institutionalization in the event of the death of the parent.

In recent years a few institutions for the severely disabled have been established,but their existence is not generally known and capacity is far below demand. In addition,entrance procedures are made difficult by official red tape.

Parents resorting to suicide had usually not been informed of the existence of those institutions and of related parents' mutual help organizations.

3. Contradictions which still remain in Japan

Various areas of discrimination are apparent to disabled Japanese; employment,housing,educational and recreational opportunities,use of public facilities and other social privileges. The disabled have great difficulty in securing job. According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare survey,68.8 percent of persons above the age of 18 were employed. The percentage of employed handicapped individuals was 44.1 percentage,a marked discrepancy of 24.7 percent.

In a comparison of earnings of the same two groups the full-time employed disabled worker earned about 70 percent of the amount earned by an able-bodied counterpart. In Japan auditory-impaired persons are not permitted licenses to drive,and some seeking work in the city find this a necessary prerequisite for certain jobs.

Some young male amputee factory workers have related to this writer incidences of harassment which forced them to move from their neighborhood. The manager of the neighborhood public bath refused them admittance because other customers were offended by the sight of their disfigurement and reluctant to share the bath water with them. These young amputees,workers in a tailor shop, are not comfortable in the public bath,yet their wages will not permit them to have housing withprivate bath facilities. The community has not understood the pain and hardship experienced by these individuals and has rejected them in order to maintain profits and pleasantness in the bathhouse.

Segregation of the handicapped is a type of discrimination. Quite a Japanese children are institutionalizaed even though many are only mildly retarded.

Without needed halfway houses and foster homes,such children whose parents cannot care for them yet who can respond to normal family and social contact and who are teachable become victims of under-developed social practices and unnecessary hospitalization.

Architectural barriers must not be overlooked as a cause of discrimination and segregation of the handicapped. The wheelchair-bound person as well as the aged and infirm want to participate in recreational and social events but often have little access to theaters,parks,department stores and other facilities.

Total city planning produces roads and buildings suited for use only by the able-bodied. Steps,curbs,and bridges create physical walls which surround the handicapped and prevent or seriously reduce their mobility.

Some extreme examples of physical attack on the disabled can still be seen in criminal cases such as that of a family suicide that included a handicapped child. One such case received wide public exposure and points up the necessity for public aid to the handicapped and their families.
The mother in this case was completely exhausted,both physically and emotionally, from the burden of sole care of an adult son who was both mentally retarded and physically disabled. This son was unable to walk,talk,or care for himself in any way. There was no possibility of medical help,and no institution would admit him and accept such a total responsibility. In addition,the mother was forced into a state of guilt and confusion by the hostility of her husband and his family,who blamed the woman for producing a defective child. In despair, she decided on suicide by gas for both her son and herself. He was killed,but she recovered and stood trail for murder. Convicted and expecting a sentence of life imprisonment,she received support from a league of parents associations which petitioned the judge on her behalf. The petition contended that the mother was the victim of a society that withheld assistance when she needed it, both in the care of her son and in her burden of societal and family pressure.
If the community had provided day care centers and clinics where families could receive help,the league asserted,the tragedy mightnot have occ̈red. Public opinion was moved to the view that in this particular case the mother should not be declared the guilty party and serve as the scapegoat for failure of the government to take responsibility for the disabled.

Nowadays public health information is spread widely and rapidly,resulting in knowledge about and understanding of various handicap among the educated populace. However,families with handicapped and disabled members are often discriminated against with regard to housing,community relations,job opportunities, and especially marrage eligibility. The public must be made to realize that discrimininatory behavior such as verbal rejection is based on unscientific reasoning and superstitious folklore which does great harm to the future of the disabled.

In summary,the causes of family handicapped suicide may be traced to two major faults; first Japanese society has failed to provide social services such as disability pensions,institutions for the care of the disabled,home-helper services,counseling and mental hygiene aid, and public education in community relationships;and secondly,the deeply rooted belief that the child belongs to the parent and has no independent rights. This latter belief in particular greatly impedes the progress of the movement to protect the childs' welfare through natioal social measures. Strategies must be developed to overcome this misconception of human rights. There is no single solution to the problem of discrimination toward the disabled,but several measures have proved helpful.

Volunteer actvities by small group of citizens(students,housewives,workers) since the early 1950's have served as the "yeast"in community consciousness-raising through personal contacts. Mutual support organizations of the disabled and their parents have emerged since World War II to exert strong pressures on political parties and government agencies,as well as to discourage discriminatory treatment of people in general. Efforts are being made by the mass media to create understanding and eliminate misconceptions about the disabled; for example,the Ministry of Labor has funded weekly radio broadcasts to educate employers and motivate disabled persons for job opportunities.

As adult remedial education is difficult and less effective,formal education for children at school and home,based on scientific facts presented in easily understood ways,is crucial. It is vitally important for children to see disabilities as mere individual differences, not defects in human dignity.
Finally,one major barrier is the lack of professional personnel trained in the science of behavioral disability and teaching techniques,who can help promote the relatively new concern for overcoming irrational social psychological mechanisms with regard to discrimination toward the disabled.

References

Chapter 21
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